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NEW YORK - THE REPORTERS COMMITTEE FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS PREPARING FOR SUBSTANTIAL BATTLES AGAINST A VARIETY OF REAGAN ADMINISTRATION PROPOSALS, INCLUDING NEW RESTRICTIONS ON OBTAINING GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND ON IDENTIFYING FOREIGN AGENTS. BUT BATTLES COST MONEY, SO THE COMMITTEE WAS PLEASED WHEN COLUMBIA PICTURES OFFERED IT THE PROCEEDS FROM A BENEFIT PREMIERE NEXT SUNDAY AT WASHINGTON'S KENNEDY CENTER OF A NEW MOVIE ABOUT THE PRESS, "ABSENCE OF MALICE."

ACCORDING TO JACK LANDAU, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMITTEE, THE GALA COULD RAISE NEARLY \$50,000 FOR THE GROUP, WHICH PROVIDES A WIDE RANGE OF LEGAL DEFENSE, RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION SERVICES ON FIRST AMENDMENT AND GOVERNMENT SECRECY ISSUES. LANDAU REPORTED BRISK SALES OF TICKETS, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT COST \$100 EACH, WHICH ENTITLE HOLDERS TO A CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION AND A DINNER WITH THE STARS OF THE FILM: PAUL NEWMAN AND SALLY FIELD.

IN THE MOVIE, MISS FIELD PORTRAYS A REPORTER WHO, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IS DUPED BY A GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATOR BECAUSE SHE DOES NOT TRY TO VERIFY WHAT HE TELLS HER, BETRAYS A SOURCE, INVADES PRIVACY AND HAS AN AFFAIR WITH THE SUBJECT OF HER ARTICLES. GIVEN THIS, IS THE REPORTERS COMMITTEE, BY SPONSORING THE GALA, CONDONING THOSE VIOLATIONS OF IMPORTANT PRESS STANDARDS?

ABSOLUTELY NOT, SAID LANDAU, WHO NOTED THAT THE INVITATIONS SPECIFICALLY WARNED FIRST-NIGHTERS THAT THE FILM SHOULD BE TAKEN AS A "DRAMATIC OBJECT LESSON" IN THE NEED FOR REPORTORIAL FAIRNESS AND ACCURACY.

IT IS NO SECRET THAT NEW YORK CITY'S TWO TABLOIDS, THE DAILY NEWS AND THE POST, HAVE BOTH BEEN LOSING MONEY IN THEIR BATTLE WITH EACH OTHER. THE QUESTION IS, "HOW MUCH?"

WHEN THE NEWS FOLDED ITS AFTERNOON EDITION, TONIGHT, IN SEPTEMBER, IT ESTIMATED PUBLICLY THAT IT WOULD LOSE \$11 MILLION THIS YEAR. A MAJOR PART OF THE PROBLEM, SAID THE PUBLISHER, ROBERT M. HUNT, WAS